

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method comprising:
maintaining a list of people known to a user;
inferring that a person is associated with the user based, at least in part, on
5 interactions between the user and a received message;
adding the inferred person to the list; and
using the list to control aspects of communications between the user and others based
on whether the others are included on the list.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the received message is an e-mail message received
10 from the person.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the interactions include replying to, forwarding,
saving, or printing the e-mail message received from the person.
4. The method of claim 2 wherein the interactions include moving the e-mail from a
first folder to a second folder.
- 15 5. The method of claim 4 wherein the first folder is an inbox folder and the second
folder is a folder other than a delete folder or a spam folder.
6. The method of claim 2 wherein the interactions include maintaining the e-mail
received from the person in an open state for a predetermined period of time.
7. The method of claim 1 further comprising inferring that a person is associated with
20 the user based, at least in part, on the user sending a message to the person.
8. The method of claim 1 wherein the received message is an instant message.
9. The method of claim 1 further comprising inferring that a person is associated with
the user based, at least in part, on indicia other than actions performed by the user,
wherein inferring based on indicia other than actions performed by the user comprises:

accessing a contact list of the user to determine a first contact on the user's contact list; and

accessing a contact list of the first contact to determine a second contact on the first contact's contact list.

5 10. The method of claim 1 further comprising inferring that a person is associated with the user based, at least in part, on detecting user actions that mitigate against factors that otherwise are used to infer a person is associated with the user.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to report a communication from the person as spam.

10 12. The method of claim 10 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to add a person to a blacklist.

13. The method of claim 10 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to move a communication from the person to at least one of a spam folder or a delete folder.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein people associated with the user are people not
15 distrusted by the user.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein using the list comprises using the list as a white list such that communications received from people on the list are exempt from spam filtering.

16. The method of claim 1 wherein using the list comprises using the list to restrict
20 received communications to those communications from people on the list.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the communications are e-mails.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein the communications are instant messages.

19. The method of claim 1 wherein people associated with the user are people known to the user.
20. The method of claim 19 wherein using the list comprises using the list to filter a display of e-mail such that e-mails from people on the list are shown on the display and
5 e-mails from people not on the list are absent from the display.
21. The method of claim 19 wherein using the list comprises using the list to filter a display of e-mail such that e-mails from people not on the list are shown on the display and e-mails from people on the list are absent from the display.
22. The method of claim 1 wherein using the list comprises using the list to restrict which
10 instant messaging interfaces display an online presence of the user to those instant messaging interfaces associated with people on the list.
23. The method of claim 1 wherein using the list comprises using the list as a white list operating in conjunction with parental controls to filter communications from people not on the list when the communications include indicia that the content of the
15 communication is inappropriate for a teen or child account user.
24. The method of claim 23 wherein filtering communications comprises blocking the communications from people not on the list when the communications include indicia that the content of the communication is inappropriate for a teen or child account user.
25. The method of claim 23 wherein filtering communications comprises placing
20 communications from people not on the list in a spam folder the communications include indicia that the content of the communication is inappropriate for a teen or child account user.
26. The method of claim 25 wherein the spam folder is locked from the teen or child account user.

27. The method of claim 23 wherein the communications are e-mails.

28. A computer usable medium having a computer program embodied thereon, wherein the computer program comprises instructions for causing a computer to perform the following operations:

5 maintain a list of people known to a user;
infer that a person is associated with the user based, at least in part, on interactions between the user and a received message;
add the inferred person to the list; and
use the list to control aspects of communications between the user and others based
10 on whether the others are included on the list.

29. The medium of claim 28 wherein the received message is an e-mail message received from the person.

30. The medium of claim 29 wherein the interactions include replying to, forwarding, saving, or printing the e-mail message received from the person.

15 31. The medium of claim 29 wherein the interactions include moving the e-mail from a first folder to a second folder.

32. The medium of claim 31 wherein the first folder is an inbox folder and the second folder is a folder other than a delete folder or a spam folder.

20 33. The medium of claim 29 wherein the interactions include maintaining the e-mail received from the person in an open state for a predetermined period of time.

34. The medium of claim 28 wherein the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to infer that a person is associated with the user based, at least in part, on the user sending a message to the person.

35. The medium of claim 28 wherein the received message is an instant message.

36. The medium of claim 28 wherein the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to infer that a person is associated with the user based, at least in part, on indicia other than actions performed by the user, wherein, to infer based on indicia other than actions performed by the user, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to:
- 5 access a contact list of the user to determine a first contact on the user's contact list; and
- access a contact list of the first contact to determine a second contact on the first contact's contact list.
- 10 37. The medium of claim 28 wherein the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to infer that a person is associated with the user based, at least in part, on detecting user actions that mitigate against factors that otherwise are used to infer a person is associated with the user.
38. The medium of claim 37 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to
- 15 report a communication from the person as spam.
39. The medium of claim 37 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to add a person to a blacklist.
40. The medium of claim 37 wherein the user actions comprise the user taking steps to move a communication from the person to at least one of a spam folder or a delete folder.
- 20 41. The medium of claim 28 wherein people associated with the user are people not distrusted by the user.
42. The medium of claim 41 wherein, to use the list, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to use the list as a white list such that communications received from people on the list are exempt from spam filtering.

43. The medium of claim 28 wherein, to use the list, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to use the list to restrict received communications to those communications from people on the list.

44. The medium of claim 43 wherein the communications are e-mails.

5 45. The medium of claim 43 wherein the communications are instant messages.

46. The medium of claim 28 wherein people associated with the user are people known to the user.

47. The medium of claim 46 wherein, to use the list, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to use the list to filter a display of e-mail
10 such that e-mails from people on the list are shown on the display and e-mails from people not on the list are absent from the display.

48. The medium of claim 46 wherein, to use the list, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to use the list to filter a display of e-mail
15 such that e-mails from people not on the list are shown on the display and e-mails from people on the list are absent from the display.

49. The medium of claim 28 wherein, to use the list, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to use the list to restrict which instant messaging interfaces display an online presence of the user to those instant messaging interfaces associated with people on the list.

20 50. The medium of claim 28 wherein, to use the list, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to use the list as a white list operating in conjunction with parental controls to filter communications from people not on the list when the communications include indicia that the content of the communication is inappropriate for a teen or child account user.

51. The medium of claim 50 wherein, to filter communications, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to block the communications from people not on the list when the communications include indicia that the content of the communication is inappropriate for a teen or child account user.

5 52. The medium of claim 50 wherein, to filter communications, the computer program further comprises instructions for causing a computer to place communications from people not on the list in a spam folder the communications include indicia that the content of the communication is inappropriate for a teen or child account user.

53. The medium of claim 52 wherein the spam folder is locked from the teen or child
10 account user.

54. The medium of claim 50 wherein the communications are e-mails.

55. An apparatus comprising:
means for maintaining a list of people known to a user;
means for inferring that a person is associated with the user based, at least in part, on
15 interactions between the user and a received message;
means for adding the inferred person to the list; and
means for using the list to control aspects of communications between the user and others based on whether the others are included on the list.